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SUBJECT: THE FRENCH VIEW IN INITIATING THE KABUL AGENDA

REF: SECSTATE 203820

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

1. (C) On November 8 poloff discussed reftel points with MFA Afghanistan desk officer, Cyril Gerardon. Gerardon explained that France agreed with U.S. views as outlined in the points, and said he was glad to see the prominence given to the United Nations' key leadership role in the country. He stated, however, that France viewed the January Conference in London as a political event rather than a forum to make financial commitments. He said that in recent meetings with the British Head of Afghanistan Unit, the French and British had discussed the possibility of "side agreements" during the conference. These, he explained, would allow participants to pledge to accomplish specific tasks without having to make immediate and specific contributions. He added that France would also like to see a clear and reliable mechanism for measuring progress to come out of the conference.

2. (C) Gerardon offered the following additional comments on U.S. views on the "Kabul Agenda":

- He noted that the document made no mention of regional dialogue, adding that the GoF would like the importance of regional dialogue stressed. Gerardon said that the constructive participation and cooperation of Afghanistan's neighbors has done much to ensure stability inside Afghanistan.

- He said the GoF would like the focus to be on the Afghan people and not other actors. Gerardon said that France agreed with the U.S. view that a post-Bonn Agreement would necessarily shift the focus from establishing a government to developing governmental capacity and accountability, and that the role of Afghans should therefore grow increasingly prominent during this phase.

- Gerardon noted the GoF supported re-examining the lead nation concept for Afghanistan to allow for better coordination on reconstruction assistance. Gerardon said that the lead nation model has sometimes been a barrier to accomplishing missions smoothly and that alternate models should be examined.

3. (C) With regard to a senior international civilian to be appointed by the UN and a steering group of key donors, Gerardon suggested that, instead of "nations leading PRT's", the body consist of "nations in charge of zones," as French/Turkish responsibility for the Kabul region is technically not a PRT. Gerardon also said that private sector development is also extremely important during this phase, and that France viewed further development of a banking system and customs as integral pieces. The U.S. and the EU, he added, should play important roles in private sector development.

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Stapleton